

Message Text

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44

ACTION ITFE-00

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 EA-07 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00 DHA-02

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R 221218Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6774

INFO CAMP PENDLETON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, UNHCR, GB

SUBJ: RESETTLEMENT OF INDOCHINA REFUGEES IN GABON

PENDLETON FOR SENIOR CIVIL COORDINATOR

REF: A. STATE 191037; B. STATE 196884

1. EMBOFF MET WITH MR. VOVAN, OWNER OF LOCAL VIETNAMESE RESTAURANT, UNOFFICIAL HEAD OF LOCAL ASIAN COMMUNITY, AND RESIDENT OF GABON FOR ABOUT TWENTY YEARS. VOVAN SAID THERE CURRENTLY OVER 100 ASIANS IN GABON. VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IS LARGEST WITH ABOUT FIFTY, AND REST ARE SMATTERING OF MANY NATIONALITIES. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE PERHAPS ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE WHO HAVE ONE ASIAN PARENT. MOST LIVE IN LIBREVILLE WITH REMAINDER IN PORT GENTIL (GABON'S SECOND LARGEST CITY) AND MOANDA (WHERE MANGANESE MINE LOCATED).

2. VOVAN SAID HE THOUGHT VIETNAMESE WOULD ENJOY GABON AS CLIMATE SIMILAR TO VIETNAM, AND THERE MANY PRODUCTS SUCH AS BAMBOO THAT ALSO FOUND IN VIETNAM. ALSO SAID THAT VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN GABON VERY CLOSE AND WOULD HAPPILY AID REFUGEES UPON ARRIVAL. VOVAN, HOWEVER, STRESSED TWO POINTS THAT HE BELIEVED EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AND THAT REFUGEES SHOULD UNDERSTAND BEFORE ARRIVING.

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ONE IS THAT REFUGEES HAVE TO AVOID POLITICS IN GABON

AND DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING THAT WOULD EMBARRASS HOST GOG
AND THREATEN POSITION OF WHOLE ASIAN COMMUNITY. SECOND
IS THAT REFUGEES WOULD HAVE TO AT LEAST START OUT LIVING
SOMEWHERE BESIDES MAIN URBAN CENTERS FOR TWO REASONS.
FIRST, HOUSING VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND IN CITIES,
PARTICULARLY LIBREVILLE. SECOND, IMPORTANT FOR ASIAN
COMMUNITY TO MAINTAIN LOW PROFILE SO AS NOT TO BOTHER
GOG'S FOREIGN POLICY. HOWEVER, VOVAN SAID THIS UNLIKELY
TO PRESENT MAJOR PROBLEM SINCE HE BELIEVED GOG WOULD BE
WILLING TO GIVE REFUGEES TRACT OF LAND NEAR LIBREVILLE
TO CONSTRUCT VILLAGE. (FYI. VOVAN ALREADY PERSONALLY
SPONSORING 22 RELATIVES WHO UPON ARRIVAL WILL BE GIVEN
TEN ACRES ABOUT 20 MILES FROM LIBREVILLE FOR VILLAGE. END FYI)

3. EMBASSY AGREES WITH VOVAN'S ASSESSMENT, PARTICULARY
ABOUT GOG'S WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE AREA FOR VILLAGE AS ONE
THING GABON HAS IS PLENTY OF FREE LAND. BELIEVE
REGUGEES WOULD FIND GABON PLEASANT PLACE TO LIVE AND
THAT THEY WOULD HAVE LITTLE TROUBLE FINDING JOBS AS
GABON LACKS WORKERS OF ALL KINDS. AGRICUTURAL AND
FISHING SECTORS STRIKE EMBASSY AS TWO AREAS WHERE REFUGEES
WITH EXPERTISE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY WELCOME AS GOG
TRYING TO DEVELOP THESE SECTORS AND EXPERIENCED PERSONNEL
NEEDED.

4. AMBASSADOR SEEKING APPOINTMENT WITH RESPONSIBLE
MINISTER IN ORDER
TO EXPLORE QUESTIONS RAISED REF B.

5. DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT.
STEIGMAN

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